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SUBJECT: PLC MAYORS DEMAND ALEMAN LEAVE PARTY

Classified By: Ambassador Paul Trivelli for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: A group of 15 mayors and municipal leaders from northern areas of Nicaragua held a press conference in Managua on July 12 to insist that convicted PLC leader Arnoldo Aleman and his family leave the PLC for the good of the party and the good of the country. This event followed a series of meetings with Ambassador and emboffs where we clearly explained our policy rejecting Aleman and his followers. Emboffs are working to pull more PLC mayors and other officials away from Aleman. We believe that the mayors' efforts will likely fail, but if Aleman refuses to release his grip on the PLC, they may decide to abandon the PLC and join forces with the ALN. End Summary.

PLC MAYORS WANT ALEMAN OUT OF PARTY

¶2. (C) A group of PLC mayors)- several of whom Ambassador and poloffs met on previous regional reporting trips -- requested a meeting on June 30 to discuss the upcoming elections and their discontent with the national management of the PLC. The group of 16 mayors, vice mayors and municipal officials from seven northern municipalities expressed their deep concern over the possible victory of FSLN presidential candidate Daniel Ortega on November 5. They asserted the need to unite the Liberal forces under one candidate to prevent an Ortega victory and expressed acceptance for both ALN candidate Eduardo Montealegre and PLC candidate Jose Rizo.

¶3. (C) The mayors complained that PLC leader Arnoldo Aleman and the PLC Central Committee (CEN) have mismanaged the party and given too much power to the FSLN through the political pact formed by Aleman and Ortega. They agreed that the PLC's list of deputy candidates is filled with Aleman loyalists who have no popular support) a "dedocracy" (personal selection by the party caudillo). Although most rural people are still firmly pro-Aleman, the mayors claimed, many Liberals are tired of the caudillos and may not bother to vote on election day. Also, the division of the Liberal forces has caused confusion in the Liberal ranks. They repeated, however, that Liberal dissident Eduardo Montealegre has little support in rural areas and only the PLC has the "party machinery" to confront the FSLN.

¶4. (C) The mayors agreed with the Ambassador that Aleman must leave the PLC for the party to recover. They claimed that 22 (out of 50 PLC mayors) agree that Aleman must go and are ready to make some sort of public statement to that regard. The mayors spoke of organizing a meeting with Jose Rizo, Jose Antonio Alvarado, and Eduardo Montealegre to try to find a way to reunite the Liberals without the stain of Aleman,s

involvement. They promised to develop a strategy and inform the Embassy.

PLC MAYORS PUBLICLY DENOUNCE ALEMAN

15. (C) A group of 15 mayors and councilors held a press conference in Managua on July 12 to insist that Arnaldo Aleman and his family leave the PLC for the good of the party and the good of the country. A large banner displayed behind the group read, "We are not blind, deaf, or dumb!" The mayors expressed support for PLC presidential candidate Jose Rizo and vice presidential candidate Jose Antonio Alvarado.

16. (C) The driving force behind the mayoral revolt is the president of the national municipal development organization (INIFOM), Eduardo Cuadra. Cuadra, a member of Eduardo Montealegre's Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN), plans to organize another set of press conferences with additional mayors unhappy with Aleman. His strategy is to emphasize the fact that Aleman's presence is preventing Liberal unity (and risking an FSLN victory). Cuadra feels this strategy will gain him more mileage with more mayors for the time being, with the eventual goal of pushing them to the ALN when Aleman refuses to back down.

17. (C) In response to the press conference, Cuadra reported that Aleman and PLC vice president Wilfredo Navarro are lobbying all of the PLC mayors to remain compliant and threatening some with trumped up legal charges from Arnoldista judges. (Comment: The completely politicized court system is commonly used by the PLC and FSLN to intimidate political opponents and extort money from the private sector. End Comment.)

COMMENT: ALEMAN POLICY SINKING IN?

18. (C) Cuadra reported that our regional visits, and especially the meeting with the mayors in Managua at the end of June, have had a tremendous impact. Our repeated statements that Aleman is the true obstacle to Liberal unity and must leave the PLC seem to finally resonate with some local officials. We will continue to support Cuadra's efforts with the PLC mayors. We believe that the mayors' efforts will likely fail, but if Aleman refuses to release his grip on the PLC, they may decide to support Montealegre's campaign.

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